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This 1961 report describes the experiences of the United Parents Association (UPA) in two New York City communities facingschool integration. In one case involving the voluntary busing of Negro children from an overcrowded school to an underutilized white school, the entire transfer occurred without incident because of the careful planning and able leadership of the presidents of the parents associations in both schools. In another situation in which the UPA was not initially involved, there was an extremely negative reaction. A UPA consultant subsequently played an ameliorative role. The report also discusses principles and techniques for improving group relations, and stresses the need for advance preparation for school integration. It is also felt that initiative from independent interracial parents associations and the help of leadership by a consultant from outside the involved communities are desirable means of achieving school integration. (NH)

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PARENT ACTION
in
SCHOOL INTEGRATION

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A NEW YORK EXPERIENCE

by

GLADYS MEYER

UNITED PARENTS ASSOCIATIONS OF NEW YORK CITY, INC.
44 West 28th Street, New York 1, N. Y.

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Foreword

EARLY in 1957 the volunteer leadership and staff of the United Parents Associations recognized that the period ahead would be marked by intense activity revolving around the problems of integration in New York City schools.

For years U.P.A had gradually been developing into an inter-racial and integrated federation in committee structure, leadership, and policy making bodies. However, we realized that the processes called for in the conscious integration of schools and their parent groups might be different from those involved in the normal and unselfconscious growth of an inter-racial association.

The basic principles of Parent Association activity had already been formulated and tested by U.P.A. in a variety of situations. We now had to develop additional skills and techniques to help our local parents associations face new conditions resulting from school integration in previously racially homogeneous neighborhoods.

Through the generosity of the New York Fund for Children, U.P.A. was able to engage the services of Dr. Gladys Meyer, a university professor and sociologist, with extensive experience in community affairs. Dr. Meyer functioned on the operating level, as a consultant, and in the training of staff. She worked closely with staff and volunteers at U.P.A. headquarters, with local associations, and as necessary with the professional staff of the Board of Education.

This publication is an outgrowth of a project which lasted for two years, during the first of which Dr. Meyer was available full time, during the second as a consultant to the association.

In publishing this material we hope that other parent groups, community groups and leaders faced with similar concerns, will find guideposts and direction markers. No two situations are likely to be exactly

the same. But certain principles would seem to be generally applicable. Some of these may have been guessed at "a priori." Here is an account of how some were tested in living experience, with real people, in developing situations.

The projects described in this report were completed prior to the establishment of the "open-enrollment" program in the New York City schools. This program makes possible, but not automatic, the achievement of meaningful integration within the parents associations as well as in the classrooms. In this process the experiences and learnings described here are finding important application.

It would be impossible to cite by name all those who made individual significant contributions to this effort. Special mention must be made, however, of Miss Florence Beaumont, former Associate Superintendent of Schools in charge of the Elementary Division, who was always willing to hear the requests of parents and to act with directness and courage. Mr. Francis Turner, Assistant Superintendent in charge of the Zoning Unit, was of continual help in the early days of our work.

A constant source of inspiration and encouragement was Mrs. Gladys Harburger, during whose term as president of U.P.A. this entire project was carried forward. Her strength and conviction, her dedication to the principle of equal educational opportunity for all children, and her unstinting personal activity on behalf of public education, led the organization in its active steps to implement the integration policy.

To all of these people, to all others who participated, and especially to the members of the Board of Trustees of the New York Fund for Children, U.P.A. presents this record of discovery, learning and achievement.

ADELE B. TUNICK
President

PART ONE

The Supreme Court Decision and New York City

WHEN the Supreme Court of the United States ruled unanimously, on May 17, 1954, that segregated education violated the Constitution, it inaugurated a period of accelerated social change in white-Negro relations and gave rise to a new explosive climate of opinion. White parents, with anxiety in many instances, had to re-examine their commitment to democracy and to public education. School administrators and teachers had to re-think educational stereotypes. Negro parents abandoned traditional patterns of accommodation and apathy and seized on the decision of the Court with what has been called "a revolution in aspirations."

The Supreme Court based its decision only in part on findings of objective inequalities between white and Negro schools: physical plant, transportation, curriculum, teacher-pupil ratio, teacher training and per capita expenditure. The central issue, as the Supreme Court clearly perceived, was the effect of segregation on the Negro child, his image of himself and of the world. This key "intangible" is, in the end, the crux of all work toward integration.

Social change brings discomfort to all who must modify old ways of behaving, thinking, and feeling. Stresses can be alleviated, however, if there is leadership in the intelligent thinking through of the steps that must be taken, in planning, and in supportive encouragement of those affected by change. In the problems of school integration this leadership role has been assumed more than once by parents associations in different parts of the country; however, nowhere was there greater strength of organization and accumulated experience on which to draw than in New York City. The United Parents Associations of New York City, in a pioneering effort, was able to formulate policy

and to develop procedures as it confronted the issues of integration, because through forty years it had established principles which served as guides in entering situations of stress.

The Situation in New York City

In New York, as in other northern cities, there is no statutory segregation. Negroes have clustered in certain sections of the city, however, as the older immigrants had done in the past and the newer Puerto Ricans do today. Thus, de facto segregation obtained in various parts of New York. Negro sub-communities have persisted in part because dispersed housing was not available to Negroes, and in part because many Negroes felt more secure with familiar people and institutions. In addition, with the increase of Negro population in the city through migration and natural increase, some formerly all white areas have been invaded by Negro populations. To some extent, in these "fringe" areas, natural integration has taken place in both the school and the community.

The problem of school integration in New York is complicated further by the fact that a large proportion of New York children have always attended private or parochial schools. The proportion in these schools has increased in recent years, so that (as of 1960) nearly a third of New York City's children are in other than public schools. Although many parochial schools and some private schools admit Negro children, the overwhelming balance of these school populations is white, thus reducing the proportion of white children in the public schools of the city.

Until the stimulus of the Supreme Court decision, Negro participation in citizen pressure for enlarged school budgets and other school improvements had been minimal. This was one reason why schools in Negro areas did not benefit as much as white areas from capital expenditures and improved curriculum. The historic pattern of enclaved sub-communities had cut off the majority of the Negro group from familiarity with and confidence in the channels of pressure used by white parents.

The United Parents Associations and other civic groups had pressed for aid for "neglected" schools, but little was achieved until the years following the Supreme Court decision. Several imaginative principals or assistant superintendents initiated creative programs involving Negro children and their parents, but they were only demonstrations of what could be done, rather than the base for an ever widening pro-

gram. Many schools observed Negro History Week or Brotherhood Week. These programs, though good in themselves, were far too limited to meet the challenges that emerged as the Negro community began to protest the facts of the situation in predominantly Negro schools.

The P.E.A. Report

After the Supreme Court decision, and stimulated by charges of "segregation" from the Negro community, the New York City Board of Education invited the Public Education Association to study the situation in the New York City schools and to prepare a report. This document, *The Status of the Public Education of Negro and Puerto Rican Children in New York City,* was released in October, 1955. The findings of P.E.A. dramatized the facts and effects of de facto segregation. Nearly three quarters (71%) of the elementary and junior high schools in New York City had either 90% or more "white" children, or 90% or more Negro and Puerto Rican children. That is, these schools were, in effect, segregated schools. Comparing the two groups of schools, nearly all the deficiencies cited in the Supreme Court decision were found to obtain in the predominantly Negro and Puerto Rican schools of the city, especially in the elementary schools. There were markedly more obsolete buildings, and there was markedly less space available per pupil, both indoors and in the playground. Lunchrooms and classrooms were much less adequate. Even more striking was the composition of the faculties: a lower percentage of experienced teachers on tenure, more probationers and substitutes, and a higher turnover of teachers. The culmination of the inequalities appeared in the tables comparing third, sixth and eighth grade average achievement scores in reading and arithmetic for predominantly "white" and predominantly Negro and Puerto Rican schools. There was a progressively widening gap, from a differential of fourteen months in the third grade to over two years in the eighth grade.

The Commission on Integration

As an outcome of the P.E.A. report, the Board of Education appointed a Commission on Integration, a body of white and Negro citizens concerned with education, to evaluate the report and make specific recommendations growing out of the findings.

The Commission on Integration prepared six reports, each with a set of recommendations. The first three of these, released during the winter of 1955-56, dealt with *Guidance, Curriculum Standards* and

Physical Plant. These reports received complete acceptance. Some steps were taken immediately to implement them. Perhaps the most notable was the initiation of a Demonstration Guidance Project which has since received national attention. The schools which were to receive increased services were initially designated as "difficult" schools (using the criteria of overcrowding, low achievement, non-English speaking, etc.). The term was unfortunate, as the communities in which the schools were located perceived the term as derogatory. There was vigorous protest and the term "special service schools" was substituted. This designation was also at first received with discomfort, but in time it was largely accepted as representing a true state—schools with special additional services.

In December, 1956, two subsequent reports of the Integration Commission were made public. These were on *Teacher Assignment and Personnel*, and on *Zoning*. These two reports and their recommendations gave rise to much overt anxiety about possible changes of staff assignments and school attendance patterns. Rumors were rife and parents and teachers were up in arms. (The sixth report of the Commission was released the following spring, on *School-Community Relations*, and was received quietly.)

In response to the reaction to the reports on Teacher Assignment and on Zoning, the Board of Education announced in the spring of 1957 that it would adhere essentially to the principle of the neighborhood school for elementary school children. This did not preclude the redrawing of zone lines for adjacent schools, or permissive zoning of children to other schools, particularly to relieve overcrowding. The Board stated at that time that no children would be bussed out of a district except to relieve overcrowding, and the zoning of junior high schools and high schools would remain unchanged. Since that time, however, permissive zoning has been extended to some junior high schools and elementary schools.

The Integration Commission's recommendations on Zoning established two policies: 1) where children were to be bussed out of district because of overcrowding, integration should be one of the objectives included in the selection of the receiving school; 2) where new school construction was undertaken, the site should be, if possible, favorable to integration. It was around these two points that controversy and public action regarding integration initially centered. The question of permissive zoning for junior high schools, and later elementary schools, assumed a prominent place thereafter.

The Commission on Integration recommended the establishment of a central zoning unit at the administrative headquarters of the Board of Education, and in the Fall of 1957 an assignment was made to this newly created post, with the rank of Assistant Superintendent. Zoning within districts remained in the hands of the assistant superintendent in the district. The Zoning Unit was defined as being a resource for data on school and district populations, a consultative office, and a channel of appeal.

The problem of teacher assignment has not yet found an effective solution. The Superintendent of Schools, in 1957, appealed for volunteers for assignment to "special service" schools but the response was very poor. Any plan for forced rotation of teachers has been effectively resisted by teacher organizations.

The United Parents Associations

The United Parents Associations has always been an inter-racial, inter-ethnic body with experienced and developed citizen leadership. It was inevitable that it should play a unique role in the issues of integration in the schools of New York City.

Founded in 1921, the U.P.A. is a federation of local parents associations in over 400 public schools in New York City, and also includes the parents associations of a number of non-profit, non-sectarian independent schools. It represents the mothers and fathers of half a million children. It is the largest parent organization in the city, though not the only one.

Two central principles have given direction to the U.P.A. The first of these is that a good school is the result of a working partnership between parents and school staff. The second is that an independent parents association, in which administrators and teachers are not members, provides the best basis for free and open discussion and the reaching of true consensus of parent opinion.

The elected leadership and the staff of U.P.A. have always maintained open relations with the Board of Education. Occasionally the organization feels it must resort to traditional pressure tactics, but this is used sparingly. The continuing emphasis has been to keep communication flowing between the Board of Education and parents. From time to time, if warranted, the U.P.A. has established opportunities for parents to present their case directly to division heads or to the Superintendent of Schools. The U.P.A. has cooperated with the Board

of Education in conducting surveys, in preparing materials for parent workshops, in publications. Over the years the organization has thus developed experience, techniques and principles for handling school problems at the local level, or of carrying them to higher authority, if necessary.

Throughout its history the U.P.A. has been active in a number of different ways in an attempt to improve the education in the less favored schools in the city. City wide conferences, conferences with the Superintendent of Schools or his staff, discussions with members of the Board of Education, public statements to the press, participation in public hearings, demonstrations, are some of the techniques used. On each issue affecting public schools in the city the organization takes a position. For example, in 1953, 200 newly appointed teachers refused their assignments to schools in low socio-economic areas. The U.P.A. urged the Board of Education to examine its teacher assignment policy which puts the youngest and least experienced teacher in a school which may make the highest demands on a teacher. At the same time the U.P.A. pressed for more guidance and remedial services in the schools.

U.P.A. is not only a watchdog and pressure organization. It is equally concerned with parent education in the local parents associations. Field staff are available for help on all local problems of parents association organization, programming, parent-school relations. Special effort has been made to develop informed parents associations and local leadership in a number of schools in Negro areas.

After the reports from the Integration Commission had been released, the U.P.A. pressed the Board of Education for adequate staffing and early definition of the functions of the Zoning Unit. In 1957, it urged that, to partially meet the problem of staffing special service schools, the Board of Education implement the Commission on Integration's recommendation that candidates for supervisory positions be required to have worked two years in these schools. In 1958 it organized a mass demonstration for an increased education budget in which many Negro and Puerto Rican parents participated.

The Board of Education's Integration Commission included the President, a Vice-President, and a past-President of U.P.A. As each report of the Integration Commission was released, it was studied by the U.P.A. staff and volunteer leaders and was analyzed at meetings of the policy making body of the organization, the Delegate Assembly. While the first three reports of the Commission received full accept-

ance, the fourth and fifth, Teacher Assignment and Zoning, occasioned great discussion and questioning in the community. At a special public hearing the President of U.P.A. urged their implementation. In 1957-58 most local parents associations in U.P.A. devoted at least one regular meeting in their winter schedule to a discussion of the two controversial reports. Some of these discussions revealed a considerable amount of parent anxiety. Question and answer sheets on the reports analyzed the implications of the Commission's recommendations. These were prepared at the central headquarters of U.P.A. and sent to the president of each local association to give clarification and facts as a basis for local discussion. Although unease was in the air, the reports were brought to the Delegate Assembly and, after full debate, were adopted almost unanimously.

The Climate of Opinion

The issue of integration lifted Negro parents from apathy to hope, and in some instances to militancy. Many white parents were plunged into apprehension and insecurity.

The recurring theme of Negro parents had been, and continued to be "Our children are behind grade; they enter bright and eager, but by the third grade are already behind. We can get no specific information about our children's achievement levels. Principals talk down to us." Sometimes these comments were expressed with discouragement and cynicism about "the same old run around." Sometimes they were expressed with direct anger.

Principals, faced with severe problems in old plants, with overcrowded classrooms, often were resigned. The rationalization was offered to them and repeated by them that "the culturally deprived" groups, to use what was once a common Board of Education phrase, could not be expected to learn as much as middle class white children. A considerable proportion of teachers in the predominantly Negro schools did not live in the district in which they taught, and their knowledge of the community in which the children lived was limited and stereotyped.

In 1956-57 "integration" was a word that could evoke dramatic emotions in the parents of children who attended either all white or all Negro schools. Headlines recounting struggles over integration in other parts of the country affected New Yorkers before they had direct experience on which to base their attitudes. Although, on the whole, there was no opposition to the principle of integration among

U.P.A. parents, and many parent leaders in the organization had had experience in integrated schools, the general climate of anxiety made itself felt.

Many middle class white parents expressed the fear that accepting Negro children in their schools would decrease the over-all achievement level of the school, and thus handicap their children's education. Off the record they discussed these fears and considered the advantages of moving to the suburbs. Some middle class Negro parents shared this fear, if further integration meant the bringing in of working class children. More than once one saw the alignment along class rather than race lines.

Negro parents, also affected by the national press and by the militant Negro press, were often both fearful and hostile, but chiefly they were determined that now the time had come for things to change. A minority of the Negro parents was primarily concerned with having children attend integrated schools, largely because these parents had confidence that they would be "better" schools; but the majority focused on how to remedy the situation in the schools the children already attended. It was frequently said, "When our schools are as good as any in the city, integration will take care of itself."

As the climate of anxiety increased some school principals in white schools shared the anxieties of white parents, or even encouraged them. The most frequent attitude encountered, however, was caution and sometimes helplessness in the face of bureaucratic complexity. Teachers complained of extra duties beyond the classroom, and seemed to have little or no recognition of the change in aspiration of Negro parents. Strident parents, many of them expressing themselves bluntly or awkwardly, were regarded as "trouble makers."

Negro parents in some places did indeed besiege their principals and assistant superintendents, sometimes with angry recriminations, demanding that something be done.

White parents, on the other hand, seemed to suffer from an epidemic of rumor. Parents on the verge of hysteria came in groups to U.P.A. headquarters for what often proved to be solely an occasion to "blow off steam," as they unburdened their fears, and it was discovered that there was no announced action on which their fears were based.

Against this background U.P.A. undertook its special efforts in integration.

In the difficult task of changing school attendance patterns in order to assure optimum opportunity for all children, educators and parents are both breaking new ground. There is the danger that in this initial stage insecurity may lead to an impasse in relations between parents and school. Three important aspects of parent-school relationships emerged in the parent activity with regard to integration in New York City. The first is the right of the parents of all children to be consulted on changes affecting their children. The second is the right of parents to discuss freely and come to group decisions without the leadership and direction, conscious or unconscious, of school administrators. The third is that clearly defined and understood procedural steps will avoid confusion, allay anxiety and minimize the potential for explosive conflict.

In the sections of this report which follow, examples have been selected which illustrate modes of working with situations of tension, and also specific undertakings to help Negro parents work more effectively for improved schools. The illustrations are presented to show the steps in process and the evolving of techniques. In conclusion there is a summary of the principles and techniques as revealed in the U.P.A. experience in New York City.

PART TWO

One Community Accepts Integration —Another Fights It!

The work of the consultant in the field with local parents associations may be classified broadly as situations of "imminent integration," some of which led to tense feelings; and situations which might be called "long range preparation for integration."

Situations of imminent integration involved problems of bussing Negro and Puerto Rican children out of overcrowded schools to schools which had space to receive them; it involved questions of changing the proportional balance in schools which were already somewhat integrated and where there was an increasing Negro or Puerto Rican school population; it involved the choice of site for new schools and the way zone lines might be drawn for such schools.

Long range preparation for integration meant primarily educating minority group parents for effective action toward improving the neighborhood schools. Probably more dramatic achievements occurred in the situations of imminent integration, but even more significant was the basic parent education work and some of the new techniques devised for the long range preparation to function in an integrated school. In some instances a situation of imminent integration opened the way for special long range efforts, as in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area, or to wider participation in established U.P.A. activities, as in Harlem. One cannot entirely separate one type of effort from another.

Since situations of tension were the prime reason for inaugurating special staff help in the period 1957-59, it may be useful to look at the problems and procedures in two such situations.

1.

CAREFUL PREPARATION EASES THE WAY

In the summer of 1957, a member of the parents association of a school in a predominantly Negro area spoke on a local radio program about the conditions in her child's school. She aggressively called for the removal of the principal as incompetent. She represented herself as speaking for the parents of the school, but in fact she had the support of only a few.

The president of the parents association, who was not in sympathy with the action, telephoned U.P.A. and the Assistant Director subsequently made a visit to the president's home and met with her and some members of the association's executive committee. The assignment to the problems of this school was one of the earliest of the new consultant.

Presenting Problems

Overcrowding was a serious problem in this school. The school building, which was relatively new and modern, housed the first four grades. Grades one, two and three were on double session, four hours each. The sessions overlapped and, because there were not enough classrooms, each group spent one hour of the four hour session in the play yard. These children were actually receiving only three hours of classroom work. Fifth and sixth grades were housed in the building which the present one was to have replaced and which was badly deteriorated.

In this school 90% of the children were Negro, and 5% were Puerto Rican. The socio-economic spread was quite wide. The school was located halfway up a hill and included children from depressed and disorganized families housed in tenements along the main truck route at the bottom of the hill, and children from stable middle class families at the top of the hill. The president of the parents association was a graduate of a New York City high school and had had some special education beyond high school. The leaders of the disaffected group were the woman who had spoken on the radio and her husband, a man who was educationally advantaged but whose occupational position did not reflect this.

They and several of the other parents had taken their children to the New York University Testing Center to be tested and had found

them to have high I.Q.'s—high enough to warrant preparation for college. The average achievement in this school on the sixth grade testing was two and a half years behind the city-wide average. From the junior high school to which these children were zoned, only a handful of students were sent to commercial or academic high schools; the vast majority were channeled to vocational schools.

Although the housing at the crown of the hill was relatively good and there was an available branch of the public library, there was little else in this community to offer enrichment except the churches which maintained a strong evangelical emphasis. To the north of the area a main shopping street cut across from the middle class white community on the other side of the valley. Here there were book stores and drugstores stocked with children's books and toys. But the population along this street was white, and the Negro group did not feel welcome there.

The principal of the school had always answered parents' questions about the school frankly. He admitted freely that the school was behind; that there were not enough books to go around; that he had not been able to fill his roster of teachers' positions. He was personally hurt by the radio attack, but he maintained his poise. Never in any of his discussions with the U.P.A. consultant did he attempt to lay the blame for the problems of the school on the parents, or talk about "cultural deprivation." Rather, he inclined to take it as one of the many difficulties of the New York school system where population was outrunning educational resources. It was he who had attempted initially to stimulate the formulation of a parents association and had suggested their affiliation with U.P.A. He had, however, one drawback: he seemed more concerned with the problems of the children from the most disadvantaged homes than with the aspirations of the more advantaged. There were several Negro teachers on the staff, though the majority were young white women.

The consultant met first with the principal and the executive committee of the parents association a week or two after school had opened. It was a long meeting; the president of the parents association was not yet very sure in her conduct of it. The principal did not attempt to dominate the meeting, though at one point he defended himself strongly. The two major problems were, first, "Has the principal the right to censor the parents association bulletin?" and second, "How can we get our children up to standard and out of that decaying fire trap which houses the fifth and sixth grades?"

The first problem opened the way to a discussion of relations between a parents association and the school administration, to the checking of facts before putting them into print, and resulted in creating a liaison committee of three members of the executive committee to meet once a week with the principal. It would discuss matters of concern to him and to the parents. It was agreed to bring before the general membership the proposal that all complaints against the school should be channeled through this committee.

In addition to the president of the parents association, the committee included the leader of the militants, the same who had made the radio broadcast. This was essential to insure the confidence of the entire parent body, and subsequently the proposal for channeling the complaints through the liaison committee was adopted by the membership. This committee was initially somewhat scattered and accusing in its meetings with the principal, but learned to organize its discussions and to maintain courtesy. By the end of the year, after improvements had been effected in the school, the parents and principal had enthusiastic and cordial relations.

In the concern about the old building and the standards of the school it was necessary to separate these two problems and find out which was felt to be the most urgent. The problem of school standards easily emerged as primary. The question was reiterated many times: "Where does the retardation start? Our kids enter school knowing as much as other five year olds." Whereas the claim might not have been entirely true, whatever discrepancy existed at first grade was small compared with that at the end of the sixth grade. Furthermore, in the system of homogeneous grouping practiced by the school, the top two sections of a grade were more nearly performing at the average level than the others. However, parents were sure they could do even better, especially those parents who had had individual testing for their children which rated them higher than the school group testing had done.

Among other things, it was patent that a child who had only part-time schooling until the fourth grade could not compete with children who had full time schooling all the way. It seemed self evident that one step that could and should be taken was to relieve the overcrowding of the school. The parents were particularly eager to have the third grade removed from double session, as the principal felt this was a key year for establishing the foundation in the three R's. The consultant therefore undertook to explore if and how this could be done.

Transferring Children

In October of 1957, when the exploration of relieving this school began, the Zoning Unit at the Board of Education had been newly created. Its chief had been appointed, but as yet he had no full staff, nor had procedure been defined for appealing to the Zoning Unit. Normal procedure would have been to approach the assistant superintendent in the district to see if he could find space in a nearby school. However, the assistant superintendent was out of the city on sick leave. The acting deputy did not feel that he could make this decision.

The problem was therefore discussed with the chief of the Zoning Unit. He was willing to explore the possibility of available space in a nearby school, but felt any recommendations for transfer would need to come from the Elementary School Division of the Board of Education. A preliminary conference was held with the Associate Superintendent in charge of the Elementary School Division. She indicated that she would be glad to receive the concerned parents or to entertain a request from them in writing. The parents were helped to write a letter stating their problem.

The zoning chief found space in a school a little over a mile away, which meant the children would have to be bussed. The initial proposal was to transfer five classes of the third grade. The proposal was referred to the Superintendent of Schools for his approval. He authorized the transfer of children *only on a permissive basis;* that is to say, transfer was optional, and each child going to the new school had to have a statement of permission from his parents. As we shall see, this proved to be a wise decision.

In the meantime another problem emerged. On the records at the Central Housing Bureau, the school which was to receive the children was listed as having eleven empty rooms. The question was immediately raised as to why more children could not be sent to that school. The head of the Zoning Unit personally inspected the school. Several rooms up under the roof were found to be unusable (the building was of an old-fashioned design and was over 50 years old). Some of the vacant rooms had been equipped by the parents association for enrichment of the school program: a science room with microscopes, an audio-visual aid room, a parents association office which was daily manned by volunteers, and a teachers' rest room. Obviously it would impoverish the school if these were converted to classrooms.

The receiving school was nearly all white in a white middle class homogeneous community. Especially among the younger parents there

was resistance to accepting Negro children from a Negro district. The perception of this district was that it was a slum area, full of delinquency and one to be avoided. Among these young, anxious parents there was no concept of the variety within the Negro community.

The president of the parents association of the receiving school had long been active in the association as her several children proceeded through the school. She had a strong feeling of loyalty to U.P.A. and she was a woman of both leadership and diplomacy. She put the possibility of accommodating the Negro children to her parents association in terms of fairness, of relieving overcrowding, of social responsibility, and she carried the day.

In order to secure permission for bussing, parents from the Negro school canvassed homes and talked to parents about what transfer would mean. They found many anxieties. Some parents were afraid to send their children to a white district. Some mothers were working and felt that their own school with its after-school program met their needs better. For a while it looked as though there might not be enough permissions to warrant the move. At this point, the zoning chief suggested that second graders be included. He felt that this would give a better spread, rather than having all the transferred Negro children concentrated in one grade. The principal at the Negro school felt that he could effectively reorganize classes after the transfer if second grade children were to be included. With this opening it was possible to secure added permissions.

At this point the assistant superintendent in the field returned from his sick leave and questioned the whole move. He succeeded in holding it up for two months. He insisted that other schools in his district had greater need, if any transferring were to take place. He felt a redrawing of zone lines could solve the problem. This was a very anxious time for parents of both schools.

For a while the white parents thought that the assistant superintendent would demand the surrender of the specially equipped rooms in the receiving school. To the Negro parents it looked like a runaround to keep them from the fruits of an action they had initiated, through which they had learned appropriate procedures and into which they had put thought and leg work. The militants were again convinced that nothing could be done through "channels," that only political, mass and legal attack would help them.

Finally a compromise was reached. Five classes from the original school, three third grades and two second grades, were formed and

were to be bussed to the receiving school. In addition, two classes (60 children) were re-zoned from another school. These children, Negro and Puerto Rican, lived just within a mile of the receiving school and therefore were not to be bussed.

Since the transfer was to take place in the middle of the school year, teachers were to be transferred with the classes and the classes were to be kept intact after the transfer until the following fall. Then all children would be assigned according to their performance level on the principle of homogeneous grouping. The teachers going to the new school felt that the period from March till June on full time session would enable them to bring their classes up, so that when the fall assignments took place the children would be more correctly grouped. The transfer gave a considerable lift to teacher morale for both those who went and those who stayed behind. The new school was a feeding school for a junior high school where the majority of the children prepared for academic high schools.

Preparations were made in both parents associations to have the transfer run smoothly. In the receiving school the parents association prepared for a special meeting to welcome the parents of the Negro children. Since the children being bussed would not go home to lunch, several white parents arranged to have their children bring lunch to school so that the Negro children would not feel so isolated as a group. Parents from the Negro school asked for and obtained permission for two parents to come on each bus for the initial weeks of the transfer. The parents were to remain in the school to be available if problems arose, or if a sick child had to be brought home, or to assist teachers, etc. A schedule was set up so that parents rotated in this responsibility.

The initial reaction of Negro parents in the new school was one of amazement. The school their children had attended had maintained an old-fashioned discipline. The new school was conducted along much freer lines. There seemed to be no formal discipline, yet there was no disorder. Negro parents were allowed to visit classes throughout the school and gained from this a significant educational experience. Some parents came every day to do what they could to be of assistance to the school. The majority of them initially became active in the new parents association.

All did not, however, run smoothly even yet. A reporter from a Negro newspaper which had been very critical of the Board of Education on the issue of integration came to the receiving school soon

after the bussing started. As Negro children came out of the busses, lined up and marched to their separate classes, this seemed a far cry from integration. The paper began a series of articles attacking the Board of Education, the "segregated classes" in the receiving school, and indirectly the U.P.A., through an article gently ridiculing the consultant.

Both sets of parents were dismayed. They had worked hard and thoughtfully to have all proceed smoothly and they were hurt. Negro parents had understood and approved of keeping the classes of their children together for the balance of the school year. White parents who had worked to persuade reluctant neighbors felt that they were being rejected after all their efforts. After three such articles had appeared, a delegation of Negro parents went to the editor of the paper and pointed out that he was hurting their effort—an effort which had resulted in the first move of its kind to transfer children from an overcrowded Negro school to a white school. The articles ceased.

One other problem emerged. The busses came for the children at exactly three o'clock and would not wait. It was necessary for the teacher to stop the classroom work sometimes as much as half an hour early to have the children ready in their outdoor clothes and in line when the busses arrived.

Despite the obstacles and disappointments, however, the reassurance came when the city-wide third grade achievement tests were given in the spring of 1958. Several of the Negro children who had been transferred ranked near the top.

The following year the Negro children were integrated into their appropriate classes. Additional places throughout the grades were opened on a permissive basis, first to brothers and sisters of Negro children already in the school, and then to others as there were available places.

The children who had been zoned to the school did not all fare so well. Some came from a very deteriorated section and some had language handicaps. In the fall of 1958 one class was formed of the slowest, and, according to the president of the parents association, at its request, the best teacher in the school was assigned to this class.

Effects of Transfer

Word of the transfer of these children spread throughout the Negro communities of New York and set off a wide movement of parent groups to try to relieve overcrowded schools in the same manner.

The effect on the parents associations of the two schools principally involved was initially very good, but in the long run not without drawbacks. At first Negro parents attended the parents association meetings at the new school with enthusiasm. However, in time, all but a few found the distance far for a night meeting; and, despite the cordiality extended to them, probably felt some alienation in the midst of a group of parents who had a variety of neighborhood ties over and beyond the association at the school.

In the parents association at the Negro school, at first the victory gave enthusiasm. Parents, with the help of the U.P.A. program service, carried out a series of high level parent education programs. Some parents attended city-wide meetings and workshops of educational groups. Meetings were held at the school on reading materials for children, on levels of learning, on discipline in and out of school. A school library was started, manned by parent volunteers who were trained by a teacher who had been a librarian. A liaison was worked out with the public library for loans and displays of books. Parents organized Saturday trips to museums and concerts.

The principal of the latter school also caught the new spirit. He and the parent liaison committee worked amicably. It was found that with sufficient persistence additional supplies could be procured from the Board of Education. The principal undertook some discussions with the teachers, and twice required them to attend parents association meetings as observers. (They had no vote, as this was a Parents Association, not a Parent-Teacher Association.)

In 1958-59 the principal reported that all was going well—too well: he missed the ferment of the previous year. In the fall of 1959, he was transferred to a school in another borough. In the first year of relation to a new principal the parents association was temporarily less active.

Part of this slump was also due to the fact that some of the ablest and most ambitious parents were those whose children were bussed and therefore had become members of the parents association at the new school. Not enough strong leadership was left. However, these are the hazards of all work with parents associations which must continually seek to develop new leadership and maintain gains in the face of turnover of school and parent personnel.

Another temporary discouragement may have affected the climate of feeling following the transfer. With population increase the school

that was relieved in the second and third grades, and had had two years of full session for children in those grades, once more faced double session in the second grade and ultimately double session for ensuing grades. The opening of a new school has eliminated this threat, and the old building which housed the fifth and sixth grades has closed.

Some important principles of procedure developed out of this experience. Despite its effect on the parents association in draining off leadership, the ruling of the Superintendent of Schools that transfer should be on a voluntary basis proved wise. Permissiveness, rather than ordering transfer by fiat, acted on the whole as a process of self-selection. The ablest and most ambitious parents, with few exceptions, took advantage of it. It was also their children who were most able to capitalize on the gains from the better school situation.

It was felt that much was gained by having parents accompany the children on the bus until both parents and children felt secure in the new situation. Within a few weeks this need disappeared, and parents stopped going. In the situation just presented, however, not only was reassurance gained, but there was a very real educational benefit to the parents who came to the new school.

Finally, the fact that the whole transfer took place without incident in the school can be laid to the efforts of the two parents associations and their two able leaders. The wisdom of the president of the association in the receiving school, her strong leadership, her genuine concern for the incoming children, her courage and high principles kept protest in check and mobilized cooperation in making the move a success. The president of the sending school grew in stature as a leader, broadened as a person and began to take a role in other interracial activities in that section of the city. She grew in poise and was by nature endowed with good judgment and strength of character. It was fortunate for such a first effort of this sort that both associations were affiliated with U.P.A., felt part of a broader organization, committed to its principles and strengthened by its services and support.

2.

FIRST AID IN AN EXPLOSIVE SITUATION

In June, 1959, the Board of Education announced that it would transfer children from two overcrowded "double session" schools in the Bedford-Stuyvesant district in Brooklyn to schools with extra classrooms in the Glendale-Ridgewood section of Queens. The an-

nouncement came as a bombshell to the Glendale parents, and they reacted strongly. Community protest meetings were held, and civic leaders, including some clergy, denounced the move. The daily papers carried front page stories. A police officer in Glendale told citizens that the move would surely bring an increase in delinquency. The property owners of the area instituted legal proceedings to block the move.

The Glendale area is an old section in the Borough of Queens, with an older population (hence the fact that a declining number of children had made space available in the school). The parents associations of the Glendale schools were not members of the United Parents Associations but of another federation.

The parents association in one school which was to send children to Glendale was, however, affiliated with U.P.A. The efforts of Brooklyn parents in these two overcrowded schools to have their schools relieved had not involved the United Parents Associations, but was self-initiated with the help of local leadership. The Board of Education announcement was made with little or no preparatory ground work. However, the principle of permissive transfer, which had proved sound in the case we have just described, was retained.

The United Parents Associations cannot step in from headquarters to work with a situation in a specific school unless it is requested to do so by the local parents association. Nevertheless, there was considerable concern among U.P.A. leadership and staff about the potential explosiveness of the situation. Therefore, the executive board of the affiliated association was contacted and asked if it wished the help of U.P.A. in preparing for the move. There was initial hesitation, since the first efforts had been made through other channels, but after some discussion U.P.A.'s Executive Director and the consultant were invited to meet with leaders of parents from the schools sending children to Glendale.

U.P.A. also attempted to contact the president of the parent federation to which the Glendale parents belonged. This contact was delayed until the end of the summer because of turnover in leadership of the other organization, but was eventually established. Other groups in the city also were concerned with the tension and publicity which had erupted. The New York City Commission on Intergroup Relations (C.O.I.R.) called a meeting of the Glendale clergy and succeeded in getting a unanimous statement, supporting the right of Negro children to full school benefits. The police officer who had

sounded a dire note as to the rise in delinquency was transferred and an able police captain was assigned to Glendale.

The first meeting of the Executive Director, the consultant, and the Bedford-Stuyvesant parents took place in July. It was held in a middle class home on a pleasant street. The parents present were alert and articulate. The group reminded one again of the very wide spread of background among residents of Negro areas. Bedford-Stuyvesant has probably been the most stereotyped area of New York City. In the summer of 1959 it had been the subject of a series of newspaper articles by a crusading journalist who stressed delinquency, inadequate schools, and other problems to be found in some parts of the area.

The first hour of this initial meeting was spent hearing the expressions of anxiety, hostility and frustration of the parents. They reported that they had been invited by the principal of one of the Glendale schools to visit the school, but that no parent of the receiving school had been present, despite invitations they, too, had received from the principal. There was an atmosphere born of discouragement and feelings of rejection. Some parents expressed skepticism of the idea that anything could be done, or that U.P.A. was really "on their side". The negative reaction of the Glendale community had recalled all the things they had read about in Little Rock, Clinton, Clay County and Virginia.

The necessity for thinking through the steps to be taken to ease the transfer for the children who would be entering the schools in the fall was pressed by the Executive Director of U.P.A. He recalled the experience of the earlier transfer, when the presence of one or two parents on each bus had so effectively relieved tension for both the children and parents, and suggested that this might be similarly helpful here. The idea was seized upon by the parents at this meeting and steps were discussed through which U.P.A. could assist in getting top echelon approval from the Board of Education. With a concrete goal to be worked for by everyone, the tenor of the meeting became more relaxed and friendly.

Later, through the kindly offices of a school principal in another borough, who had community connections in Glendale, the U.P.A. consultant had an opportunity to meet the new police captain serving the Glendale area. The consultant felt that it would be mutually helpful if the officer and the parents of the children who were to be trans-

ferred could meet informally. It was felt that this should be a small off-the-record meeting, solely to acquaint the parents with the Captain and the Captain with the parents.

This second meeting took place shortly afterwards at the same home. The full tragedy of living in an enclaved, segregated district, and the effects of the publicity attending integration struggles across the nation, were the major impact of this occasion. These parents told the police captain that they wanted the busses and the school building searched immediately before their children entered them. The bombing of a school was a very real possibility to them, particularly in view of the hostile statements to the press that had been made by Glendale citizens. They wanted to come in cars and accompany the busses on the first day of school.

When the U.P.A. consultant suggested to the police captain that it would be wise for a parent representative to remain in the school for the day in case a child were ill, his first reaction was that a police car could bring the sick child home. The reaction of the parents was immediate. They understood that if a police car took one of their children from the school, this could never be explained to the Glendale community as illness.

Two decisions were made at this small informal meeting. The first was to re-emphasize the desirability of having a parent on each bus who could remain in the school during the first weeks after the transfer. The second was to call a meeting of the Bedford-Stuyvesant parents shortly before the school opened, to brief them on the plans to safeguard their children and to request them not to come in large numbers or in cars accompanying the busses. These two July meetings did much to diminish anxiety and to modify the expectation of trouble.

The briefing meeting was held late in summer, as planned, under the auspices of the Board of Education. After some wavering back and forth, the Board of Education, under U.P.A. pressure from the President and the Executive Director, gave permission for one parent to accompany each bus.

On the opening day of school, the Glendale streets surrounding the school were cordoned off by police, and only school children or others on school business were admitted to the school block. Pickets were on hand but could not approach the school. Busses rolled up and lines of well-dressed smiling Negro children disembarked and entered the school building.

Despite the fears of white and Negro parents, the situation had come off calmly, though special tribute was expressed to the police captain for handling well the potentially explosive first day of school. It was recognized that community attitudes among some would not change. The suit of the property owners is still pending. Certainly anxieties have diminished on both sides. The criticism was expressed that too many organizations (N.A.A.C.P., C.O.I.R., U.P.A., Glendale Council of Clergy, Glendale Citizens' Council, etc.) were involved with too little coordination. However, it was the feeling of the Negro parents, on the one hand, that they had had to use all means at hand and press on all fronts. The Glendale representatives, on the other hand, felt that they had naturally resorted to their own community organizational channels when threatened with change. It seems at present as if the situation is moving toward acceptance and adjustment.

In this situation U.P.A. was able to draw upon its earlier experience. There was not the advantage of having both groups of schools with parent bodies affiliated with U.P.A. and committed to its leadership and principles. It is important, before children are transferred to a new school, to have the anxieties of *both* sets of parents brought out and discussed. It is important to let hostilities be expressed to a buffer. It is important to have the proper safeguards and organization of the first days of transfer.

PART THREE

Developing Principles and Techniques for Improving Group Relations

AS INTEGRATION becomes more fully implemented, Negro parents and white parents must be able to work effectively together for common objectives in the school. This is only possible as parents recognize that the goal of integration is not merely to give equal opportunity to Negro children, but is the enrichment of experience for white and Negro children alike, and for their parents.

A number of examples have been selected to illustrate principles and the growing development of "know-how" in achieving this goal.

1.

A MEETING ON BROTHERHOOD

The first example is drawn from a meeting to which the consultant was invited as a speaker on brotherhood. This parents association was one where considerable anxiety and resistance had been expressed the previous year when the Integration Commission Reports were discussed. The school served a middle class neighborhood of predominantly single family homes. A handful of middle class Negroes had recently moved to this otherwise all white district. The Negro parents had joined the parents association, but attendance was infrequent and they rarely spoke when they did attend.

At this meeting on brotherhood several local clergy came as invited guests and all the Negro parents came. The meeting was well attended by white parents. It seemed important, in view of the past history of group feeling, to avoid inspirational generalities and to try to bring into the open the real concerns of the parents, so that they would not avoid facing next steps for more cooperative action.

The leader used the technique of defining problems as she had encountered them in her own school experience (segregated) and that of her child (integrated) and what she had observed and learned in her

work as consultant to U.P.A. In the discussion period which followed there was then the basis for her to assume the role of buffer and target for feelings which were expressed. With some encouragement and reassurance, the parents were able to speak frankly. White parents stated their fears that the neighborhood would become "more Negro"; that school standards "might" decline. Negro parents stated that, although they were treated with courtesy, they had not been included in parents association committees and did not feel free to speak at meetings.

Out of this meeting grew the first real involvement of the Negro parents in the parents association, and the joint efforts of white and Negro parents to provide enrichment materials for use by teachers and children.

In evaluating the meeting afterwards with a group of the parents, it was agreed that if there were adequate leadership to keep the discussion on a rational plane, a session in which fears and concerns were brought into the open was valuable. Further discussion of modes of procedure in dealing with integration issues brought common agreement that it was more desirable to use Negro speakers to speak on topics which are part of the normal parents association program, as, for instance, a Negro librarian on children's use of the public library. To use a Negro speaker on "integration" is to keep him before the white members of the audience as a representative of his race and its concerns, rather than as a qualified individual. White parents, when the speaker on a race issue is Negro, tend to retreat behind a façade of courtesy.

2.

HARLEM PARENTS MEET WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS

For a number of years there had been meetings of the parents association officers from schools in five districts in upper central Manhattan. School populations in these districts ranged from all white, to interracial, to all Negro. Before 1957 the attendance at the meetings was nearly all Negro. This was due in part to the fact that U.P.A. had been making a special effort to develop Negro leadership in this section of the city. Also, in the early years, the more sophisticated white parents found the discussions too elementary, as the gap in organizational experience between white and Negro parents was too wide.

Concern about integration gave more impetus to white parents to attend these meetings. The place of meeting was shifted to be nearer

direct lines of transportation for the parents in the most distant district (largely white). Over the two year period, 1957-59, about thirty local parents associations participated regularly, involving over a hundred individuals. Slightly more Negro than white parents came, but several all white schools sent regular representatives. It became a truly interracial working body.

The group worked out a tighter organizational structure. Representatives reported the substance of the meetings to their local associations, and in turn, brought questions from their executive boards which they wished to have discussed. It became the practice to have the chairman of a particular standing committee in each local association accompany the president to these meetings whenever the agenda contained a problem which was within the function of her committee. For instance, the Legislative Chairmen might come when there was to be a discussion of the school bond issue, and Program Chairmen to a meeting on programming. After the first year the chairmanship of this area meeting was rotated each month to increase experience and broaden leadership.

In the course of the first year of working together, a spring afternoon dance for parents and children of the five districts was planned as a fund raising effort. This has become an annual event. It has not only given an opportunity for common gaiety, but for cooperation in planning, organization and bookkeeping for a large undertaking.

Urgent special issues were always discussed at these area meetings. One such was an evening given over to the discussion of the zoning for junior high schools. Another was on an imminent referendum on a State Constitutional Amendment to make possible an increased school bond issue. From this group representatives went to speak at the hearings of the Board of Estimate on the budget of the Board of Education after collecting and discussing the urgent specific needs of schools in their districts.

Undoubtedly the working together of white and Negro parents on these efforts brought new orientations to all who participated. Perhaps one of the most valuable aspects of these meetings, however, was the recognition that the central concern of both white and Negro parents was school standards, curriculum, guidance and remedial services. It was for this group that the consultant worked out material on standard curriculum and "enriched" curriculum for the elementary grades. Suggestions were developed for supplementary activities in the home and in the community, and community resources were explored.

The experience of this area meeting as a continuous and structured group showed us that it was possible to avoid reduplication of staff effort by meeting a larger group, and to give parents an intermediary experience of organizational participation (larger than the local association, but not so large as the Delegate Assembly). It involved parent groups, who had once thought of themselves as separate, in common concerns and in the urgent concerns of one another. A not inconsiderable by-product was the opportunity for a variety of informal interaction between individuals in the group from different schools, different backgrounds and different ecological areas.

3.

A LESS SUCCESSFUL PROJECT

The successful growth and strength of this area meeting led the organization to undertake something similar in a fringe area in Brooklyn. Here there was some initial resistance to the U.P.A. effort by the assistant superintendent in the district, and it was finally planned as a joint effort of U.P.A. and the district superintendent's office, with the district superintendent selecting for participation seven parents associations which he termed "ready for this." Meetings were called by the assistant superintendent's office.

This undertaking did not have the base of some years of ground work as had been true in Upper Central Manhattan. Furthermore, the representative from the district superintendent's office was not accustomed to as free a give and take, as comfortable with criticisms of the schools, or as patient in developing inarticulate or timid feelings of dissatisfaction into informed action, as was U.P.A. Finally, the experience of all parents (white and Negro) in this area of the city was less sophisticated than that in the area described above.

Only five meetings were held, in 1958-59. Four of the seven "designated" schools participated. Several Negro parents came regularly, but the majority attending were white.

The problems these parents were concerned with were primarily basic organizational problems: budgeting and planning finances of a parents association; relationships between parents and principal; getting out a bulletin of parents association activities; committee recruitment. There was opportunity for much individual attention to particular situations, but for several reasons this effort was hardly different from a work shop on organizational problems.

In the first place the school-community coordinator of the district called all the meetings and attended them all. The last two meetings scheduled were never held because of her illness. She often interrupted to steer the discussion away from any questions that might involve tense feelings. The meetings were of benefit, but lacked depth. The experience showed that when parents are not involved from the beginning in planning and responsibility, and there is an atmosphere of control from "above," interest will flag, leadership will not develop, and the results will be meager.

4.

STRENGTHENING PARENTS ASSOCIATIONS IN ALL-NEGRO SCHOOLS

Though all the projects discussed thus far dealt with parents directly involved in school integration, U.P.A. was also concerned with strengthening weak parents associations in all-Negro schools. Frequently the problems in these schools resulted from an inability on the part of both the Negro parents and the white school administrators to relate satisfactorily to each other. An indication of this on one hand was a president's excessive reliance on the principal for direction; while in other schools these two stood as antagonists on a battlefield.

With a small grant from The New York Foundation, a young man with social work training was employed by U.P.A. in the Spring of 1958 to undertake intensive work in five schools in Harlem which had been selected in consultation with the parents associations and the assistant superintendent of the district. The project was supervised by the consultant and had two main goals:

1. To develop active, informed and organizationally effective parents associations.

2. To ascertain whether appropriate parent activity could contribute to the enrichment of the learning experience of the children in school.

It became evident that the parents in these schools were not so much apathetic as they were inexperienced in organizational activity and lacking in confidence. It was important to show them ways of working.

Much work was centered on helping the presidents of several of the parents associations to have a clearer picture of the president's

role. Liaison committees were set up to hold regularly scheduled conferences with principals, to channel complaints and gain information. Where executive boards were weak and positions unfilled, special effort was directed to finding recruits for all positions and helping them learn their functions.

Parents association news bulletins were initiated and published for distribution to the general membership. One association set up a school construction committee to work for the replacement of its antiquated building. With help from U.P.A. volunteers, the committee learned the procedural steps necessary to getting the replacement included in the Capital Budget of the Board of Education.

New avenues were explored for increasing membership participation. In one school volunteers made an extended program of calls on individual parents to determine what they thought parents association activities should be. Program chairmen in all the schools received help in planning programs to meet the real needs and interests of the parents. It was shown that attendance at P.A. meetings tripled when the quality of programs improved.

Where factions in parents associations were formed it was the practice not to try to explore the underlying motives which created dissensions, but rather to acknowledge the validity of opposition, appropriately expressed, as a valuable stimulus to keep the concerns of all in view. Emphasis on concrete goals made it possible to mobilize joint effort despite differences where recognition and responsibility was given to opposition members.

Better communication with teachers grew out of the establishment of a "class parent" program. This program, which is an established procedure of U.P.A., provided for assignment of one parent in each class to represent the other parents. A channel of communication was thus set up between the parents of a class and the teachers on each grade level. Three important purposes were served: the improvement of home-school relations, the spread of parent education, and the development of parent leadership.

It was important, too, to work with school personnel to enable them to communicate more effectively with parents. The parents had been previously discouraged by the presentation of information couched in stilted language with professional jargon and the didactic manner of the school staff.

The parents associations undertook various projects to provide enrichment for the school program such as securing speakers and movies for the children, and, in one instance, started a pen-pal program with children abroad.

The presidents from four of the five schools met together several times and exchanged experience and knowledge. They learned from each other and stimulated each other. Participation in the Upper Central Manhattan area meetings followed.

Unfortunately this project was curtailed when the initial grant was not renewed. The field worker, out of his own creative imagination and under the guidance of the consultant, had applied much that had been learned, not only in the main body of U.P.A. experience, but in the specific work begun in 1957.

5.

PARENTS AND SCHOOL STAFF FIND COMMON UNDERSTANDING

Despite promising beginnings it became apparent that intensive work with individual schools was a luxury beyond the resources of U.P.A. Therefore, it seemed that other techniques must be devised. The experience of the two previous years was reviewed and discussed. Finally, a project was planned which offered the opportunity of adapting these techniques to a collective venture.

In the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn the ferment that produced the bussing of children to Glendale continued. Despite the reduction of overcrowding, parents were concerned with the continuing educational problems in their neighborhood schools. Individual requests for help had reached U.P.A. from parent groups of nine elementary and two junior high schools in that area. The form of these requests reflected a similarity of problems and it was decided that a joint project involving all eleven schools might prove a fruitful undertaking.

The Assistant Director of U.P.A. was assigned to work alone on this project. In the Fall of 1959 she called a meeting of the parent leaders of these schools and asked them to outline what they considered major problems. This meeting revealed the parents' distrust of school personnel, their concern about raising their children's achievement levels, their disputation of the school's assessment of their chil-

dren's "mental capacity," their sensitivity to teacher attitudes. The parents were asked whether they would be interested in embarking on a joint effort to meet these problems.

They agreed to work together, with the help of U.P.A., toward establishing closer relations with the schools in order to raise achievement levels. By so doing they accepted the basic assumption that trust, friendliness and understanding between parents and school would enable both to do a better job.

Through the good offices of the Associate Superintendent in charge of the Elementary School Division, the project was assured the co-operation of the assistant superintendent of the district involved, and in turn the principals of the eleven schools.

From this point on procedures at each step were discussed with the parent representatives of the eleven schools and their decisions acted upon. The first of these involved an interview with each of the eleven principals by parents in his school. The U.P.A. representative accompanied parents at these meetings and her role was that of buffer.

The parents were received graciously and the principals shared quite freely information about the reading achievement levels, the problems the school faced, and their own attempts to deal with them. The problems were generally the same—high percent of pupil turnover, teacher turnover, behavior problems, inadequate library facilities, lack of home stimulation, poor comprehension and limited listening ability.

During these conferences the U.P.A. staff member observed common, recurrent difficulties in parent-school relations. Bruised feelings of school personnel, who felt they were doing so much in a difficult situation and getting no thanks, were met with the impatience of parents who wanted improvement immediately. The common types of misunderstanding and sensitivities appeared as they have in other situations already described. The conferences showed that both the school and the parents had contributed to the lack of status and function of the parents associations in these schools.

These observations were discussed with the parents and led to a series of monthly meetings attended by all the principals and the parents, and held in the office of the assistant superintendent. This provided an opportunity for discussion of areas of common concern and facilitated freer communication between school personnel and parents.

With each successive meeting the group felt its own identity emerging and learned to discipline its members when differences threatened explosion. They gained courage to speak openly about sensitive concerns. The role of discussion leader, assumed at first by the U.P.A. representative, transferred finally to one of the parents. This evolving leadership was not only a satisfying experience for the parents, but also won the respect of the principals.

There was give and take on both sides. The parents, for the first time, began to fully realize the handicaps and problems faced by schools in underprivileged neighborhoods. At one point these problems loomed so large that their courage seemed to waver. It was necessary to allow them to express this and come to terms with the fact that gains would have to be made step by step, but that they could be made.

On the other hand, there was an impact on the principals too, perhaps focused by a discussion of the way "Negro History" was taught. They became aware of unconscious ways of speaking that reflected stereotyped thinking. They began to understand the parents' feelings about being Negro and related this to difficulties they or their families had faced in the past. A basis for mutual understanding and respect had been established.

The parents also met separately to evaluate and review what was happening and to plan future steps. Before the schools opened in the following year they met with the Superintendent of Schools and outlined areas which they felt required Board of Education action. The Board was compelled to recognize the importance of solving these problems quickly and set in motion some special programs. The parents, too, are continuing their efforts to build parent support for better education.

This project benefited from all the thought and experience which had gone into the earlier work. Careful planning and involving parents in every step, the use of leadership as a buffer, the development of group coherence and trust, the gradual pressure for assuming increasing responsibility for decision, enabled this group of parents to accomplish a great deal in a short time. Not only were relations improved and communications opened between parents and school, but energies released to pursue concrete goals. Greater trust was established in each other, in the school system with its manifold problems, and in the U.P.A. as a broad, supportive structure in their efforts for a richer life for themselves and for their children.

PART FOUR

Conclusions

THIS report has presented selected aspects of the experience of the United Parents Associations of New York City in helping white and Negro parents meet constructively the anxiety and changes attendant on school integration. The problems in New York have been similar to those in other Northern cities experiencing the improved occupational status of Negroes, change in housing patterns and increase in Negro aspiration. In this period of rising aspirations there is always the threat of breakdown of relations, not only between white and Negro parents, but even more seriously, between school and parents, with the resulting detriment to the children in the schools.

Integration problems in Northern cities involve 1) the movement of Negro children from districts of Negro residence to schools in other districts where the population is predominantly white; 2) the attempt in "fringe districts" to maintain a racial balance in the school population; 3) grouping which will make integration meaningful; 4) improvement of educational quality in predominantly Negro schools, especially elementary schools, so that able children will not be handicapped in entering secondary schools which draw also from other areas. These have been the problems which have stimulated the United Parents Associations to develop its role in new directions, and to discover new ways of helping its member parent groups.

Over many years the nature of the U.P.A. organization has made possible the experience of white and Negro parents working together for limited, immediate goals for the schools. This process helped to combat the stereotypes and handicapping attitudes of both sets of parents. The actual experience of participation together on an equal basis set the stage for acceptance of the concentrated effort described in these pages. It further made possible the large reservoir of goodwill which was the base of these efforts.

In limiting the report to the principles and techniques of dealing with situations where there has been breakdown or threatened breakdown in relationships between the parents and the school, resulting in militancy, resistance or apathy, we have selected the most unique part of the total experience. Many collateral problems, or by-products of the U.P.A. effort in integration, might have been expanded. Parents have been concerned with the question of homogenous or heterogeneous or other criteria for grouping in schools, which has direct bearing on integration in these early stages. The U.P.A. has been concerned with the integration of parent leadership in local parents associations to a wider extent than would be apparent in this report. It would be possible and tempting to analyze the step by step development of some of the parent leaders who have emerged in this work in integration. It would be possible to present an entirely different analysis, concentrating on the position taken by the U.P.A., the arrival at consensus, statements of position, and the possible effect, at each phase of emerging Board of Education policy. It might interest many to examine the efforts of parents and of schoolmen to enrich curriculum and widen horizons for children in the face of these new challenges. The whole problem of teachers has not been touched.

Much that might be of interest in a wider sociological frame has been left out in order to sharpen our focus. For example, we have barely indicated the wide status structure within the Negro communities. We have omitted references to differences of approach to action, to schools, to home authority, as between recently migrated southern Negroes, native born New York Negroes, Caribbean Negroes. Such differences, however, have never proved insurmountable in eliciting cooperation toward a concrete goal, though they have often influenced the nuances of ways of working.

Similarly, we have not discussed work with Puerto Rican parents. For New York City the absorption of this large Spanish-speaking minority is a special problem. Cultural differences make necessary modifications of approach in work with this particular group. The issue of, and the emotion invested in, "integration" have not centrally affected the Spanish-speaking population, although some reactions of continental white parents to the influx of Spanish children into their schools have reflected anxiety similar to their feelings about additional Negro pupils. Moreover, in the two minority groups there is resentment of the constant coupling of the two groups in the phrase "Negro-and-Puerto Rican." The Puerto Rican problem, however, is not com-

parable because it does not carry the historic burden of unconscious race attitudes and is more nearly viewed in the pattern of older European immigrant groups. It warrants consideration in a separate analysis.

Principles

The principles on which our work moved forward were not new, but were dramatically confirmed in the work described. First and foremost of these was the principle of an independent parents association. When teachers and administrators are not members, and therefore not policy makers, parents are freer to discuss and come to consensus without loss of face, and to develop initiative and leadership. They can often press for action with which the school administration is in sympathy, but where it would be inappropriate for administration to take part. A corollary of this is, of course, that an independent parents association will not be effective unless it is informed and able to observe agreed upon procedures.

The other most important principle which emerged was that there must be preparation for changes. Time must be allowed for anxieties to be expressed and dealt with and for parents to form a clear and reliable picture of what they may expect. Preparation must involve both groups of parents, preferably with the help of leadership not personally involved (such as the U.P.A. staff member). The differences between the two situations cited in Part Two (above) are evidence of the necessity of shared participation in planning and formulating decisions and procedures.

Techniques

The techniques which were developed were of several kinds: techniques in discussion, leadership roles and skills, organizational techniques, and concrete actions to create reassurance.

Techniques of discussion include the creation of a controlled situation in which attitudes of polite avoidance of real issues are abandoned and bruised feelings and anxieties are exposed, expressed, examined. Although "therapeutic" in character, such efforts have not concerned themselves with any underlying sources of anxiety in individuals, but have kept to the concrete focus of what they thought they feared or resented, whether or not the facts supported their feelings, and what could be done. This technique has had different levels of application. At its simplest it has involved dealing with an all white or all Negro group of parents and letting them "blow off steam." Another level

has involved the encouragement and guidance of a free discussion of anxieties in an interracial group of parents. Still another level has involved the creating of a situation in which there could be open and frank discussion, disagreement, criticism and questioning between Negro parents and the white administrators of their schools.

Techniques of leadership in potentially explosive situations demand that the leader be able to use himself as a target to draw off hostility. His ability to handle the hostility directed toward him is not only "cathartic," but is a learning experience for the group that observes how hostility is handled. A person with "professional" or quasi-professional status has an advantage in this role in that he is ascribed a detachment which is often not allowed to a volunteer, even if the volunteer has been able to achieve detachment and balance. Leadership in situations of tension, such as we have described, needs to have persons who are clear about their own feelings about race, who have a positive commitment to integration and the ability to accept anger directed toward them without feeling threatened. Parent leaders, like school personnel, should have their attention called to "the unconscious language of prejudice" through which they reveal their perception of members of another race as representatives of the race rather than as individuals. In working with Negro parents, directness and absolute adherence to one's commitments are necessary if inevitable suspicions are to be overcome. Not only is it important that such a person perceive parents, white or Negro, as individuals; but there needs to be sensitivity to the nuances of status, background and experience that affect reactions of parents, Negro and white alike.

This experience with integration developed new organizational techniques for dealing with common problems of several neighboring schools at once. In a situation of tension this is only possible if every step of the work is carefully thought through and discussed with the parents thoroughly, and, if need be, repeatedly, only moving as fast and as far as they can agree to move. In this delicate process the superimposition of ideas by leaders can cause the whole situation to explode. On the other hand, the burden of thinking through the various steps to be taken, and assessing the process at each move, is the responsibility of the leader.

Actions that are part of successful integration are those of helping parents to appropriately carry their case to the Board of Education, if necessary at successive levels, as was done in the first case described. Another type of action was arranging for anxious parents to have an

informal meeting with the police captain in the second case described. The mechanics of the bussing procedure, which provided for one or two parents to accompany the busses initially, was important where tension existed. However, with proper preparation to eliminate anxieties, this becomes unnecessary; and many transfers have since been made without it.

Continuity

In these first years of special efforts at integration each situation drew from the previous experience, and each situation built a broader base for the common action of Negro and white parents for mutually desirable goals for schools, and public education, in addition to integration.

As parents whose children were being transferred became active in the parents associations of the receiving schools, shared aspirations for "good schools" made integration as an issue recede. If good preparation enables Negro parents to make the effort involved in traveling a greater distance, and white parents to use effectively the dedication of the new group, enrichment occurs for parents and children alike.

As parents from local parents associations move to larger activity in the city-wide structure, Negro and white parents, working together, keep the organization dynamic and flexible. Thus they are able to ride out temporary setbacks, iron out disrupting tensions, keep sight of goals, develop new approaches, and constantly review situations and procedures.

In presenting this experience of the United Parents Associations there is the hope that it may be suggestive to parents in other communities. Although the New York City federated body is somewhat unique, other parent groups can cooperate to capitalize on what U.P.A. has learned, without the long process of development which the New York organization has undergone. U.P.A.'s basic strength is its "grass roots" democratic structure and the genuine interaction of staff and volunteers. The staff is small. The number of committed volunteers is large. Staff does not make policy, even indirectly. The Officers and Executive Council of the United Parents Associations do not limit the creativeness of the staff. The organization demonstrates what it hopes to create in education—the working partnership of citizen and professional.

APPENDIX

The Structure of the United Parents Associations

Membership:

A local parents association or parent-teacher association may join the United Parents Associations upon application as the result of the vote of its membership. Help is given, if needed, in completing the organizational structure and the adoption of by-laws before the application is accepted. Dues are fixed by the local association and may vary from 50 cents to two or three dollars per family. A proportion of each member's dues is contributed to the federated organization for the maintenance of headquarters and staff.

The Delegate Assembly:

Policy in the federation is formulated by the Delegate Assembly. These delegates, selected on the principle of proportional representation, come from each local member organization. The Assembly meets once a month from October through May. A Delegate Assembly meeting is usually attended by more than one member of a local association and actions of the Delegate Assembly are then reported to the local groups. Delegates may be instructed or uninstructed. Delegate Assembly meetings usually have an attendance of from 500 to 800 people, with movable microphones in the aisles so that active floor debate can take place.

Officers and Executive Council:

The elected officers of the U.P.A., chairmen of standing committees, and ten elected delegates constitute the Executive Council, which is responsible for carrying out policy. Any issue that has the support of three local parents associations may be laid before the Delegate Assembly for discussion and action. The U.P.A. officers, committee chairmen, all those responsible for policy making, are volunteers, par-

ents of children presently attending public schools. No person can be a voting member of U.P.A. who does not have a child in school.

Professional Staff:

There is a small professional staff to assist the organization: an executive director, an assistant director, a part-time field staff, and a part-time program consultant. At the offices of the organization there is available specialized information on education, on parents association programs, maps of the school districts, projected new school sites, figures on school population for every school in the city, publications and directives of the Board of Education, and so forth. There is also available the information on both the annual capital budget and the expense budget of the Board of Education with the appropriate breakdowns affecting each area of the city. City-wide population trends are studied.

The Function of the Central Organization:

Over the forty years of its existence the U.P.A. has become the primary watchdog with regard to educational policy and administration in New York City. Each year members of the association present important school needs at the public hearings on the capital budget and the expense budget. Once a year, a trainload of parents goes to the State Capitol to interview their representatives and to present education needs to their legislators, since supplemental state funds and state policies directly affect New York City schools. There is an annual conference at which broader educational issues are presented by outstanding speakers and a series of panels make possible small group exploration of timely concerns. Occasionally when there is an acute issue, a mass demonstration is organized. The president of the U.P.A. makes public statements in support of, or in criticism of, new actions or policies of the Board of Education which are within the proper purview of a lay group.

The U.P.A. is a service organization for its members, consulting, advising on procedure, encouraging, providing program help, carrying on on many levels the task of parent education and the development of citizen participation and leadership. The U.P.A. office is in a loft building in downtown Manhattan. Parents are encouraged to come into the office for help with any problem in their school or association, and frequently three or four meetings will be going on at once using every available corner. Parents may also telephone for information about their local schools, for programming help, for ad-

vice in proceeding in some area of action in their local association. These telephone calls are handled by the staff member who knows the most about the particular school or problem, or may be referred to a volunteer committee chairman. If the matter is simple, it is settled over the phone. If it is more complicated, a committee of parents is encouraged to come to headquarters to explore the problem, or one of the field staff may go to the school to discover more about the situation and to meet with the parents association or its executive committee. (However, field personnel only attend meetings of local parents associations if they are invited to do so.) In the case of working parents, or those living at considerable distance from Manhattan headquarters, frequently the U.P.A. representative will meet the parents in one of their homes in the evening.

When an issue or problem has aroused widespread concern, mimeographed material is prepared at the central office and mailed to each local association. This may be a description of issues, a question and answer sheet giving correct information on a matter that has elicited many inquiries, a call to action, or a notice of a meeting.

In addition to these frequent mailings, a printed bulletin, *SCHOOL PARENT*, appears at intervals discussing major issues, reviewing books, giving program suggestions and so forth.

Training sessions for new presidents of local associations are held each spring and workshops for officers and committee chairmen occur frequently during the year, both at the city-wide level and in specific local areas.

Standing committees of the federation bring people of a variety of experience together to discuss, for example, the specific problems of elementary schools, junior high schools, high schools, or private schools (initially private school parents were included in the founding of U.P.A. and some non-sectarian, non-profit private schools are members), legislation, or community relations. Occasionally, ad hoc committees are created to pursue an area of specific concern. Every meeting of every committee, with the names of those attending it, is recorded and in the files, as is every contact with a local association by a member of the staff.

With these devices, the staff and volunteers in the central office weld together the dispersed local associations to meet to some extent the problem of annual or biennial turnover of local leadership. The central office is thus the nerve center of the federation, but the policy making is in the Delegate Assembly.